

Rudra

You must find
*within yourself the deep, sincere
need to grow.*

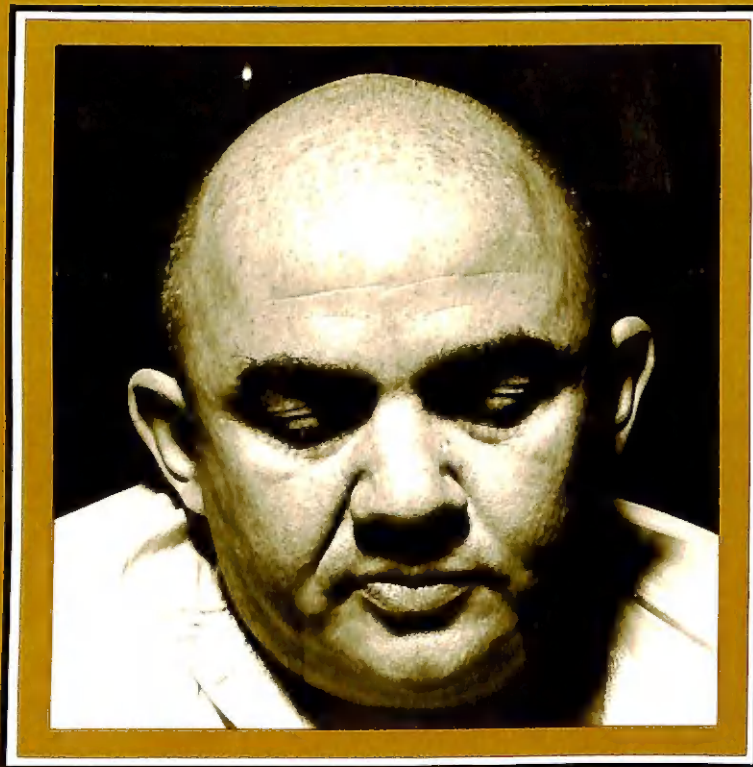


PHOTO BY BARRY KAPLAN

R U D R A

NITYANANDA INSTITUTE

The Nityananda Institute, headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a non-profit center dedicated to the active practice of a spiritual life. Named for the Indian saint who is its wellspring and inspiration, the Institute is under the direction of Swami Chetanananda, an American spiritual master in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism.

The presence of this living teacher and the opportunity for sustained contact with him gives the Institute its unique character.

The Institute sponsors many programs, ranging from a full residential program to quarterly Retreat weekends to courses in hatha yoga. The heart of the practice is the daily kundalini yoga meditation program in Cambridge which is open to occasional and regular visitors alike, after completion of the Introductory Program. And for information and study, the Institute's Rudra Press offers a fine selection of translated texts and contemporary spiritual writing.

FRIENDS

FRIENDS of the Nityananda Institute is the resource development vehicle that helps support the programs and activities of the Nityananda Institute. Your financial contributions, volunteer work, or in-kind donations directly affect the Institute's ability to serve you, and are always gratefully received. If you wish to contribute to FRIENDS and receive a quarterly Newsletter detailing current and proposed projects, please send your tax-deductible donation to: NII/Friends, P.O. Box 1973, Cambridge, MA 02238.

ABOUT THE COVER

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The Nityananda Institute® logo is styled after a photograph of the young Nityananda, c. 1930.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In the ordinary scheme of things, you might think of winter as a time of dormancy and perhaps withdrawal from worldly activities – a quiet time when not much seems to happen (though the fires may be roaring inside). The barren trees bear perfect visual witness to this notion. But to us at the Nityananda Institute, January and February are always a time of special remembrance, celebration, and joy, for these are the months that mark the beginning (January 24) and end (February 21) of Rudi's passage through this life. Rudi, whose inner work made our life as a community of spiritual people possible. Rudi, whose roots became our roots, whose heart lit our hearts, whose breath became our own, whether we knew him in the flesh or not.

This year, even more than usual, our thoughts turn to Rudi because it is, amazingly enough, the fifteenth anniversary of his *samadhi*. In those fifteen years the growth of the Institute has been steady, vigorous, and exciting – a hugely expansive event under the guidance of Swami Chetanananda. In 1988 this growth will bear fruit in the form of new programs, publications, and activities, with more people able to participate, at more locations. Both the FRIENDS of the Institute and the Rudi Foundation are experiencing new strength as well.

Appropriately enough, the many manifestations of this growth tie together the articles in this issue of *Rudra*. Both Swamiji and Rudi address directly the issue of the guts of growth – how to direct your efforts to achieve the goal of expanded awareness, greater capacity, and an enriched quality of life. In every case, they remind us, it's content, not form, that matters. The forms of growth are infinitely varied; the content is one.

Our other articles reveal just some of these forms. All came out of the experiences of students at various programs offered by the Institute in 1987, many of which will be available again this year. Vici Kins wrote her article on the teacher after attending a week-long teacher training retreat at Martha's Vineyard last summer; Nanette Redmond's article about meditation is adapted from a talk she gave at a two-day public retreat program in Cambridge. Sharon Ward, who writes a regular column on hatha yoga for *Rudra*, is one of the Institute's nearly two dozen certified hatha yoga teachers. Dr. Rachel Brooks, also a frequent contributor to *Rudra*, based her article about nutrition on a "Wellness Weekend" retreat given at the Vineyard last summer.

As you participate in the ever-widening circle of Institute activities this year, think about how they reflect the endless growth implicit in this work. If you feel so inclined, write down your thoughts as an essay, a poem, an article, or draw a picture, take a photograph, and send it in to us. We would like *Rudra* to reflect the full range of our readers' experiences: delights as well as obstacles, the simple moments of communion as well as the dramatic. Life is magnificently full; let us know how that fullness touches you.

As for us, this winter especially, we scarcely notice the leafless trees, because we are full of the love Rudi showed us, the love Swamiji exemplifies, the love we give form to through our own work. We hope this issue of *Rudra* will nourish that love in you.

THE RUDRA STAFF

Drawing: Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of Dance. Shiva dances in ecstasy to the eternal tunes of the cosmos. The dance itself represents the activity of Shiva as the source of the universe.

Lineage is a flow of grace that transcends time and space.

NITYANANDA

Nityananda lived in southwest India from the late 1800s to 1961. Over the years, he attracted thousands to the remote jungle village of Ganeshpuri. Why did they come? Certainly not because it was easy, since conditions were harshly primitive, and Nityananda rarely spoke. They came simply to be in his presence, and they were satisfied. Such a holy man is called an avadhut in Sanskrit – a living miracle of pure consciousness in human form. Timeless and eternal, the avadhut is a direct link to the Absolute, containing all teachers who went before him and all who follow. The grace of the avadhut Nityananda flows in our lineage.

RUDI

One of the thousands who visited Ganeshpuri was Rudi. Born in Brooklyn in 1928, Rudi had long been actively pursuing spiritual development when he went to India in 1958 and had the meeting with Nityananda that changed the course of his life. Returning to New York, he continued his flourishing Oriental art business while teaching thousands of students in the U.S. and Europe. One of the first Americans to be recognized as a Swami, Rudi was a totally new spiritual manifestation: a fiery fusion of East and West whose only interest was the inner transformation of growth and transcendence.

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Born in Kentucky in 1948, Chetanananda went to New York to meet Rudi in 1971 and immediately knew that this was his teacher. After Rudi passed away, Chetanananda became head of the ashram organization Rudi had begun. In 1978 he was initiated as a Swami, formalizing his unwavering commitment to spiritual growth. The opportunity for an immediate, personal relationship with a true teacher is a rare treasure. Swamiji, a thoroughly contemporary American, provides the living link to the timeless lineage that flowed through Nityananda and Rudi.



PHOTO BY BILL STANTON

LOVE in the TEACHER'S EMBRACE

BY VICTORIA KINS

I read an article recently about an autistic child. Ten or twelve years old. A girl. Apparently she'd been incommunicado for years — didn't want any of it.

Well, as it turns out, her mother wasn't going to sit back and stand for the silent routine. She found out about a European therapist who'd had quite a bit of success with a method for bringing autistic children out of themselves. This method, called "holding," involved pairing mother and child for long hours in embrace — mostly grueling embrace, grueling for both parties. An agonizing, heroic attempt by one person to connect with — inspire, kindle, get some life moving in — another person.

Victoria Kins, a ten-year resident of the Institute, is currently Product Marketing Manager at Lotus Corp. in Cambridge.

The article showed pictures of the girl, some of them at difficult moments. Sometimes I've felt like she looked. I don't show such feelings in quite the same way, but I'm transparent. I know exactly how my photograph would look.

Apparently, this mother's efforts with her daughter have had significant results. The girl is now in school, has at least one playmate, and, at ten or twelve, is remarkably articulate in writing about her experiences, both of alienation and of joy in beginning to participate in her own life.

She wrote an interesting statement about her experiences in "holding" with her mother, something to this effect: "It looks like you're torturing me, but you're saving my life." The kid gets an "A" for insight.

God, it must be hell sometimes to be that mother. What a job.

Awareness of the Teacher

Spiritual students live with an awareness of their teacher. Whether it's getting a whiff of Love at an odd moment in the day, having a silent conversation about an event in progress, or literally sitting with the teacher, the spiritual student very often has his/her teacher in spirit or in mind.

But if you think about spiritual practice from the teacher's point of view for a moment, you'll recognize something you vaguely know. The demands on a teacher are enormous. Recognition of that fact strikes you flatly when you look at the pressures of the job and the unpleasant obstacles to doing it well. Part of this understanding comes from looking objectively at yourself as a student. It's not always easy, but it gives you a lot better idea of how much work a teacher has to do – and how much you, as a student, have to be grateful for if you have a qualified teacher.

The Experience

I'll bet you've experienced some unusual things in the course of your spiritual study – the euphoria of a meditation drenched with love... the impossible stamina of selflessness, letting you persevere toward an outcome clearly beyond

your capacity... the miracle of release plucking you from the severest agitation unscathed and full of insight.

Euphoria, impossible stamina, miracles... these are not everyday experiences. The terms are lofty, almost unapproachable. Yet the experiences they describe are accessible to anyone, and even common for people who study a spiritual practice.

But the alternatives are also common, for everyone: living in reaction to circumstances, milking good times for pleasure, and wading through difficult times with no purpose beyond surviving the moment.

The range of a spiritual student's experiences is enormous, but there's a distinctive theme. We learn to rely upon

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our inner resource and to call upon it to make the most of any situation. But where's the starting point? How do students learn the approach that effectively transforms average circumstances into illuminating events? And how do students manage to sustain the effort that it takes to achieve mastery through them?

Spiritual students are just about always buoyed through this process by gifts given consistently by a teacher.

The Teacher

You may have noticed that the archetypal teacher is generally portrayed as an enigmatic figure who speaks in parables or one-syllable words that brim with double-entendres. This image is in keeping with a paradoxical fact: the teacher doesn't actually teach the student anything.

Most people would pick a flower-lined path to a destination every time. A clear-cut route provides a secure feeling. But students who look to a teacher for this in a spiritual practice find themselves frustrated or infuriated. At times, a teacher can seem to be shrouding instruction rather than communicating it clearly. There's good reason for that. A true teacher simply does not supply students with formulas. Formulas are equivalent to dogma. When a teacher resorts to dogma, he enacts his will upon the student.

A teacher's true objective is to promote the awakening, flowering, and stabilization of the life force, the Self, in his students. In action, he is a witness, observing from the vantage point of complete immersion in the Self. Since the teacher functions from a state of absorption in the Self, it is that energy of the Self which awakens the Self in the student. The teacher participates in this display of Self-liberating capacity within the student.

If it can be said that the teacher does something, it is to create an environment permeated with Self-awareness in which students can learn. In this teaching environment, the student has an experience of contact with the Self. Through this contact, the Self unfolds to articulate an ever-deeper level of well-being in the student.

The Swamp

Spiritual practice from a teacher's point of view... to think about it has stirring effects. You look at how your teacher works and expresses himself. Then you look at how we, his students, work and express ourselves as we make our slow ascent. Put those two alongside one another, and it's clear that somebody's working on one level and everybody else is working on another. That has to be tough on the teacher.

Imagine this. Imagine wanting to make a gift of the thing you love most to someone you're mad for. Imagine having to wade through a swamp to do it. Well, to be honest with you, it seems to me that that's pretty much a way of life for a spiritual teacher. A teacher makes a gift of the very finest part of himself over and over again, and wades through some of the boggiest possible swamps to do it.

Though the teacher provides the environment for growth, it is the student who determines the terms of the growth through his openness. The teacher, or rather the energy of the Self, meets the student according to his own terms, going where there is an opening. But

growing can be painful. And though we want it in the abstract, we may be stopped short or put off-track by the pain we experience.

The teacher is the vehicle for the energy of life, the Self. That energy supplies us with an opportunity for the growth we ask for, but it often works its wonders through pain. It occurs when the energy bumps up against our crystallized patterns, setting off bombs inside us to destruct those limitations. If it's too painful, the student shuts down and the energy meets resistance. Result? More pain. The organism responds as though to a threat, mistaking the closest object for the cause of the pain. And that closest object? Guess who. It is as though the teacher wears the face of the student's obstacle. There's an expression about executing the messenger who brings bad tidings. I imagine it's like that for a teacher a lot of the time.

The Demons

I suspect that the autistic child I told you about is haunted by demons. These demons represent everything the child fears in the world that presses in on her. The spiritual student is also subject to demons, demons such as doubt and fear.

When the energy moves inside us, we very often experience agitation. If we react, we experience doubt, fear, and more. These are nothing more than our own resistance. However, this resistance involves our mind and emotions in a complex psychology that traps us before we know it. We become the objects of our own smoke and mirrors, and we forget to trust the energy. Our hearts close, our perceptions become colored, and we see confirmation of our fears everywhere. The interaction with our teacher becomes strained – the most terrible confirmation. Yet it is we who create what we fear through our resistance. This resistance engulfs us with a force that itself repels the teacher's energy.

The Silence

Like the autistic child who chooses silence rather than accept the world on its own terms, the spiritual student sometimes chooses to be mute. In this self-imposed silence there is a semblance of control. It's an unusual silence which forms an impenetrable barrier, through which we fend off the world and resist the demands of the energy. Perhaps we believe that if we can keep our thoughts and feelings invisible, if we can prevent exposure, we can avoid the need for change.

What we can't or won't transcend, what we know we can't express, we encase in the cocoon of silence. There is a sense of safety in that muteness which allows us to continue living with our own private brand of agony, the agony of our thoughts and feelings. It is a painful solution, but it is a game in which we hold the cards.

The student has chosen to be "silent," i.e. ignorant, and defends that silence with a complex series of smoke-screens calculated to put anyone intending to intervene off-track. What appears mute on the surface is a bubbling turmoil of unspoken feelings which have a tremendous force.

We don't want anyone, especially our teacher, to see or know the unspeakable

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feelings in our minds or hearts. We refrain from communicating openly with the one person who can help us make that vital connection with the energy of life that will lead to transformation. We resist the closeness of the embrace and remain closed to the energy of Life. This is the mire in which the teacher wades as he works with the energy and with his students. It is a swamp of psychology, with its mental and emotional leeches and eels. It is here that the teacher maintains his vigil and holds his students, each one, in loving embrace.

The Embrace

On some level, the teacher and the student are in a perpetual embrace. It may have the quality of a lover's em-

brace, so sweet that you begin to miss it while it's happening because you're so afraid it will end. It may be like a quiet hand-holding, filled with the meaning of commitment. At times, it may take on an almost violent quality.

The cause of violence in that embrace is similar to that of the coming together of mother and autistic child in "holding." It is a meeting of two people in intervention and resistance. In "holding," the mother intervenes in the face of the child's silence. The child resists out of ignorance or stubbornness, not wanting to engage the fact of her place in the world. The force of violence in the embrace intensifies as the child's unwillingness to connect works at cross-purposes with the mother's wish to fuel the germ of life.

What differentiates the relationship between spiritual teacher and student from that of mother and autistic child is choice. The student chooses to grow. He chooses growth because he knows he wants it, because he's experienced the benefit, because the Self in him will not be denied. The energy is both insistent and inescapable, calling the student to recognize a reality he doesn't always want to face. Despite the pain of the embrace, the student is grateful. And though he can't help trying to avoid, he doesn't really want to escape.

The Gift

It must require an exertion of remarkable strength for the teacher to hold a student in the throes of such resistance. It must require an even more remarkable compassion and love for the teacher to be willing to do it.

The embrace is a storm in which the student is torn apart to be restructured. In it, the student struggles to hold onto the familiar, which is in fact his own self-restriction.

Thankfully, in the chemistry of the embrace, one and one do not equal two. Logical outcomes are not to be expected and deadlocks are dissolved. The element of Love which infuses the embrace is a magic ingredient that can burn through the limits of self-restriction in a moment, evaporating the pain and trauma simultaneously. Like the calm after the storm in which the world is fresh and new, in the aftermath of the embrace one finds stillness. The student emerges transformed to his very fiber.

"It looks like you're torturing me, but you're saving my life." ■

I HAVE SUCH A TEACHER

*Last night
my teacher taught me the lesson of poverty:
Having nothing and wanting nothing.
I am a naked man standing inside a mine of rubies,
clothed in red silk.
I absorb the shining, and now I see the ocean,
billions of simultaneous motions
moving in me.
A circle of lovely, quiet people
becomes the ring on my finger.
Then the wind and thunder of rain on the way.
I have such a teacher.*

— Jalal al-Din Rumi

From *Open Secret: Versions of Rumi*. Translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks.
1984, Threshold Books, R.D. 3, Box 1350, Putney, Vermont, 05346.

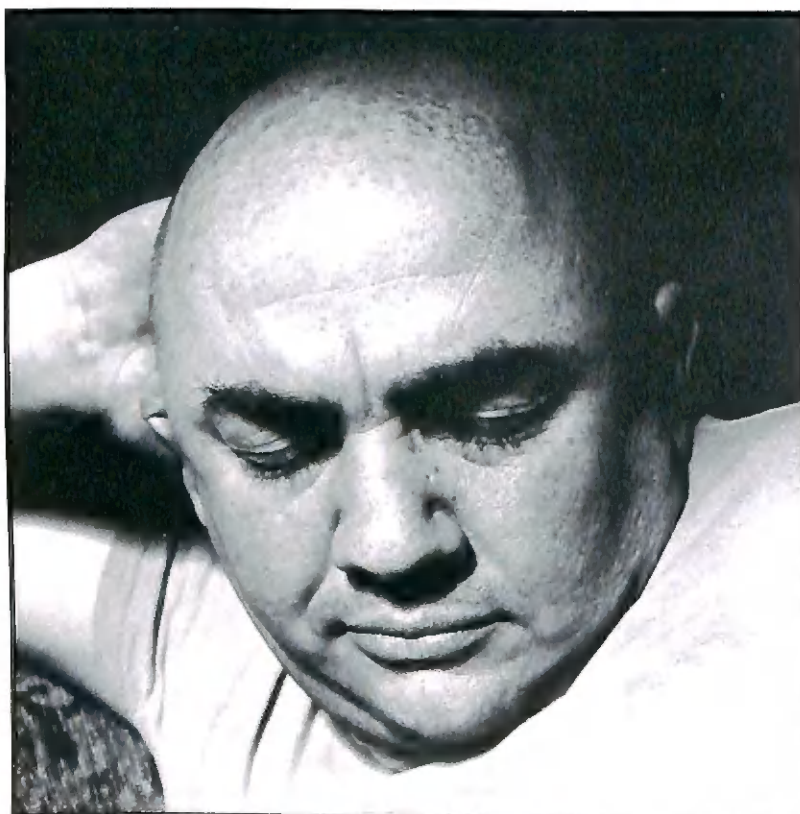
AN IMPORTANT factor in our growing is to be sure that all our objectives flow in the same direction. Anything counter to our purpose becomes a tension which impedes the rapidity with which we can grow. It is no different than a plant growing in nature. There must be enough water and sun. Too much water or too much sun will hurt the growth. It is the conscious balance that a human being can maintain that will produce not only growth but a healthy spiritual being. There is an instinct within us that allows us to attract what we need.

THERE IS AN EXPRESSION, "Money goes to money." Spirituality certainly goes to spirituality. By increasing the amount of energy required to grow, a stronger appetite is developed, and this stronger appetite attracts situations which previously would have destroyed the mechanism. Because of the increased inner expansion the mechanism can handle a stronger energy and larger quantities of expansions. There is an expression, "If you want something done, give it to a busy man." This is based on the correct premise that anyone who can do one thing well can do many things well, and that it is easy to expand something that is already in a state of expansion. In real estate, brokers always offer property to someone who has previously bought. The resistance in somebody the first time is so enormous that it is "a pleasure to deal with somebody that knows what he's doing." Spiritually what could be considered an opportunity for a developed person could mean the destruction of someone who didn't have a history of spiritual development and study. The more a person lives, the deeper his commitment to his objective, the greater

the acceleration of his growth. A young or inexperienced person finds it agonizing to make a decision. An executive makes hundreds of decisions a day.

ALL THINGS THAT reflect spiritual growth are the manifestation of energy. The pattern manifests itself as a moving-picture not only to show what is happening at the moment but also to project the future. A stockbroker on Wall Street has dozens of graphs and innumerable sources which he continually keeps in touch with to project relationships. The depth of a stockbroker's sensitivity to the material and the rapidity with which he acts determines his success as an individual and the success of his firm. It is not only our own capacity that determines our success; the people and organizations we associate with can limit our capacity in many ways.

THERE ARE MANY talented people who amount to nothing. There are many superior people who live deeply unhappy and unfulfilled lives because they do not have the discipline to put their talent to use. A growing creative existence requires large amounts of a continually higher energy to sustain the pattern of growth. Along with this growth there is the need to act upon the stoppages and to keep the flow of creative energy constant. Since man is not a machine, there are increases and decreases in his flow of creative energy. This fluctuation causes stoppages which, if they are not corrected, will break down the mechanism. If this were to happen in a cotton-spinning machine, it would show up in the lack of finished thread being wound on a bobbin. It



GROWTH AND EXPANSION

RUDI

It is the conscious reaching for more
energy and for spiritual
development that allows us to go to
higher levels.

Taken from *Spiritual Cannibalism* (3rd edition), Rudra. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Rudra Press, 1987. Reprinted with permission.

would also cause a tangling of fiber, which would not allow the mechanism's repairs to be made.

ALL STRUCTURE within a human being represents the natural resources given him at his birth to enable him to reach complete fulfillment. It is very much like certain countries where people have lived for many generations without exploring their natural resources. In present times, these countries have been found to be enormously rich; their riches and the necessary technology to free them will begin to raise their standard of living. This has come about through the world's need for their raw material.

IT IS ESSENTIAL for a human being to place himself where there is a call for what he has to offer. Having the advantage of movement, naturally he is not restricted in the same way raw materials are that are locked in the earth. Black slaves in America escaped from the South to the North when they had within them the wish to fulfill themselves. European people of all classes and religions moved to America for the same reason. Today the movement need not be from place to place. It is essential that it be from level to level within each person so that he can find out how he can free himself of his own restrictions, which are the tensions which come through his birth and past life.

TO RID THE BODY of inherited tensions, you must either break them down so they can become part of the flow of creative energy or learn to use them consciously toward the direction of spiritual growth.

WOMAN ARE FIGHTING for their liberation. One outstanding expression being manifested is hostility — not an opening up of the deep quality that is within a woman. We see the same thing with blacks and every group that proclaims its need to be free. This is a direct expression of how tensions are the first thing that must be removed before a person can find his inner freedom. This has to be understood so that it is not met with counter-hostility, but with love and consciousness. The need for deep nourishment is there, and it is the only way to break down these tensions. The best treatment for a starving man is for him to increase his food intake slowly. This is the only sensible way to achieve change, but of course this advice is usually resented as everyone wishes immediate results. Slowly nourishing the starving man allows his adjustment to be complete and he does not suffer from the muscles being overloaded before they are strong enough to absorb food quickly.

THE IMAGINATION and energies within a person have the capacity to shape the future. The wish within a human being is the most powerful energy that exists. It can scale mountains and cross oceans as it expresses a depth beyond the ordinary. It is capable of the extraordinary as it continually expresses a force which can control the destiny of the individual himself or the person he relates to.

A CONTINUAL FLOW of energy going in the same direction year after year is capable of doing anything. Need and pres-

sure can turn anything or anyone into something of an extraordinary nature. The need for change has only to do with the ability to meet a strong energy and allow it to become a guiding force. Martin Luther King's most touching expression was "I have a dream." A visionary has the capacity to suffer for other people and for an objective regardless of insurmountable pressures. These pressures stimulate and nourish rather than hinder a strong and creative person. Gandhi had a dream; Moses had a dream. It is the ability to visualize beyond the limitations of society that can set the world on fire.

THE DARING OF ONE person's expression is the key to the door of many people's energy. It is necessary for us to find the challenge that can raise us to a higher level. We meet a challenge, we meet a dream; and because that energy is greater than ours, reaching for it gives us the nourishment to fulfill it. This is the expression of an inner hunger that can only be satisfied by feeding on this energy.

IT IS NOT HOW much we receive but how much we can internalize that accounts for our capacity to grow. Consciousness in a person is the ability to make the connection between himself and the source of energy and to keep it open and flowing. A good furnace is one that takes in fuel without any waste and gives off maximum heat. For a person, wrong identification and attaching of levels lower than the ultimate objective bleeds out energy and reduces the capacity for success.

IN NATURE IT IS the endless crossbreeding of a new strain for dozens of generations that produces a superior strain. In a human being it is the wish that is reflected in enormous outer change. It is our emotional capacity that allows us to make the sacrifice and it is our minds that reflect that sacrifice.

THE PURPOSE OF all that I have written is to show how we can take experiences and use them as ascending steps. It is the conscious reaching for more energy and for spiritual development that allows us to go to higher levels. It is a limitation in the mind that makes people think that spiritual work requires the abandonment of responsibilities on the physical level, such as family and friends, a job, and the providing of food and shelter. This idea comes through laziness and spiritual ego, which has allowed inferior people to demand what very superior people attain through deprivation and very hard work. To see a great saint working in India is astonishing. His ability to have long and arduous interviews with endless numbers of people each day requires an almost superhuman capacity. For this he is rewarded with a bowl of cereal and possibly a cup of tea. His system is so refined that it does not require more nourishment.

SPIRITUAL WORK, being an expression of very pure creative energy, affects anything touching it. It is the most fertile, nourishing soil. The joke about Texas could be applied to it: if you put a seed in the ground, jump back, because it will grow so quickly it will throw you off your feet. But when we develop within ourselves and enter this creative flow, we must not jump back but allow the flow of creation to express itself. ■

What are we looking for when we take up a meditation practice? There are lots of words – liberation, transformation, growth, emotional stability, maturity, the truth – but how do we reach these goals? What can we do each day to make this transformation of our experience real and vital? What can we do each day to discover and understand the unity of all of Life? I'd like to examine three key elements of our practice: conscious breath, effort and surrender, and the teacher.

1. Conscious Breath

The foundation of every meditation practice is conscious breath. By focusing your mind on this automatic process, the process itself is almost immediately transformed and you experience this most basic bodily function in a completely different way.

Take a moment to feel this right now. Bring your attention to your breath. As you breathe in, feel the breath deepen and lengthen. Let the breath fill you completely and feel your center of attention dropping into the lower belly as you draw your breath down. Relax. When your breath is full, notice the slight pause between inhalation and exhalation. At the end of your exhale, again notice that quiet space between the breaths.

Now feel the difference in your state. It literally takes only seconds to go from an unconscious, automatic level of functioning to an awareness of the vitality of Life that is pulsating in every moment. You might say, "It's so easy! Anyone can do that!" And yes, that's true. That's the great thing about it. That's why simple meditative techniques are taught by doctors, psychologists, and counselors to lower blood pressure, to relieve anxiety, and to reduce the effects of stress on mind and body. These breathing techniques are effective regardless of your religious faith, moral code, personality, brand of deodorant, or shoe size. It's the only truly democratic activity in the world.

For the spiritual student, of course, this is just the beginning. If you follow the breath deeply into yourself day after day, year after year, everything changes – how you experience life, who you think you are, your understanding of why you live.

Someone recently asked me what makes people stick to a meditation practice for

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What Can We Do Each Day?

—

THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF A MEDITATION PRACTICE



PHOTO BY PATTY SLUTE

by Nanette Redmond

so many years. It's a good question from a beginner's viewpoint, because in the beginning, you spend 90 percent of your meditation period just trying to sit comfortably and quietly, learning to ignore your itchy nose, the hair tickling your forehead, and that nagging pain in your left knee. Then the next big challenge is breathing consciously for more than two seconds at a time without being distracted by a word from your local sponsor – the mind. This is the effort part, because we overcome these difficulties through our stubborn, determined effort and surrender over time, and through our connection with our teacher.

2. Effort and Surrender

Effort and surrender. Concentration and passivity. Focused awareness and relaxation. Expansion and contraction. We work to find a balance, a harmony, a rhythm, between these sets of apparent opposites. To me, this is one of the most interesting facets of our practice, because that balance changes every time you sit and changes constantly in your daily life as well. It is this constant resetting of the balance point that makes our practice a dynamic, living process that we engage at every moment.

To illustrate this point, let's examine the double breath exercise, which is one of the foundational tools of our practice. In this exercise, we focus our attention on the heart and naval chakras. The act of focusing itself (effort) creates a kind of contraction, but as we relax (surrender), this focused awareness gives way to an expansion. Our relaxed concentration allows a change to take place in the energy structure of that area. We make an effort with our concentration and then we step back and observe the change. We are not making the change, we are allowing the change to happen. This is the beginning of our experience of surrender.

When we sit in meditation, we use the breath to focus on each of the seven primary chakras – focusing and then surrendering and allowing an opening to take place. As you work to develop your sensitivity to these energy centers and the flow between them, you can visualize the centers opening like flowers and visualize the flow between them, rising from the base of the spine to the top of the head.

Understanding effort and surrender in meditation practice is what brings your practice alive day after day, year after

Derived from a talk given at the July, 1987 Retreat program in Cambridge.



year — because you never know what will happen when you sit down! The only constant is the fact that you sit down with a sincere wish to grow, and with a willingness to accept a new awareness.

Bringing It Into Every Moment

In the long run, it is crucial to bring this type of attention and awareness to your everyday life. A meditation practice won't work for you if you keep it separate from your life experience. Every day you can draw this effort and surrender, this observation of the creative energy expanding and contracting, into every moment of your life.

Many years ago Swamiji told me, "You have to see everything and not be affected by anything." This one directive has been a major part of my practice ever since. First of all, "to see everything" means a careful, unflinching observation of myself, of others, of relationships and situations. It means having the patience to observe carefully, reserving judgment long enough to see at least part of the truth. So many times I have found that my immediate reactions are dead wrong — because you never get all the information, all the sides of the story, in the first telling. And it's the same inside yourself — often you have to take a long pause before you are able to admit to yourself your own hidden agendas and self-serving motivations.

The second part of his instruction, "and not be affected by anything," is really a killer. Just think about it — how many reactions do you have in a single day? But if you take it one moment at a time and develop the skill of careful observation,

it becomes possible to react less. As you begin to live from the center of your being, it's easier to distinguish between what is coming from you, and what is the other person. You are able to observe how people exchange energies, and how totally your reaction affects every situation for well or ill. You begin to see that ultimately the issue is how the energy moves in you — contracting, expanding, flaring up, and cooling down. This discrimination cuts down on the action/reaction syndrome. You find you have the peace and centeredness inside to let Life unfold freely.

3. Connection to the Teacher

Studying with Swamiji has gotten me through every period of my growth. It has given me the opportunity to see his one-pointed inner effort and intensity become transformed into pure awareness. I have seen and felt Swamiji's consciousness expand into the experience of the total unity of Life, and I continue to watch him live from that awareness every day.

The presence of such a person in a student's life makes transformation possible. The teacher's work and depth of understanding create a tremendous opportunity for us as students. I look at Swamiji and I know it's possible! The only thing stopping me is my acceptance of limited awareness, my laziness, my fear of change — my misunderstanding.



PHOTO BY BILL STANTON

Swamiji recently explained the essence of the student-teacher relationship in the context of kundalini yoga class. The Self, or Pure Consciousness, in the teacher looks out and sees Itself in the

PHOTO BY BILL STANTON



student. This viewing sparks the awakening and functioning of the Self in the student. The contact is made regardless of the student's awareness. The very presence of the teacher transforms our consciousness while we struggle and fumble and work to make our own transformation a conscious experience. The fun part comes when we begin to experience this presence in ourselves and find in that moment of meeting the eyes of Swamiji the startling experience of the Self in us gazing at the Self in Swamiji. Pure consciousness viewing pure consciousness. That's fantastic!

Finally we begin to understand the true meaning of love and respect. That pure, totally vital creative energy that pulsates in us and in all people, that pure consciousness *is everything*. The Self in me greets the Self in you — and all difference evaporates.

To become stabilized in this awareness, we use the tools of our practice — to get us going, to center us, to get us back on the track when we wander off. These tools have to be used consciously on the first day and fifteen years later. We sit down every day. We relax our bodies, we train our minds to concentrate, we use conscious breath to draw our awareness within to the more subtle pulsations of the energy. And we carry our breath, our effort and surrender, and our devotion and service to our teacher into the fabric of each day. Through our effort and surrender, we come to accept ourselves as we are. Through the presence of our teacher, we have the chance to know complete joy and freedom. We come to understand the unity of Life. ■



Photograph taken at the July 1987 Retreat Program.



BY SWAMI
CHETANANANDA

The SEARCH FOR AUTHENTIC LIFE

The search for authentic life is not a common search. Even though we are all drowning in life, the authentic, true, direct experience of it is not easy to come by. Only when we direct our attention beyond the form and structure of our everyday lives do we begin to engage a reality that is more substantial and direct, more honest, true, and permanent.

The *process* by which we shift our attention from this ordinary, everyday reality (and the tensions and frustrations that populate it) to a dimension in which there are continuously fewer tensions is called *growing*.

Growing is how we attain the experience of true life. It is the expansion of our awareness from the limited perspective of all of our inner wants and needs, and from all of the outer material circumstances of our lives, into an awareness that is beyond time and space. Growing is the activity by which our awareness extends itself through the insubstantial walls of our own psychology (our mind and emotions) into the essential reality that we are composed of. We then express ourselves from that reality every day. It is an awareness of the very essence of all inner and outer forms of experience. In short, grow-

From talks given at the September 26-27, 1987 Retreat in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

ing is at once a breath we take and a life we live.

Openness and Commitment

Growing starts as a reaction to pain. Our desire to grow is often an expression of disgust for our own circumstance in particular and for worldly circumstance in general. This reaction to worldly experience sets something in motion within us which, if it is to succeed, leads to a commitment – a commitment to change, a commitment to the discovery of authenticity in our lives. Our desire to find authentic life and our rejection of inauthentic life – our understanding that there has to be something more – leads us to look deeper.

In that process a certain openness comes about. We open ourselves to new possibilities for living. But this openness is not something that we wander around in forever; it is not an openness that has no boundaries or perimeters. It is an openness which should allow us to make a deeper commitment within ourselves to something very specific: the continuous experience of authentic life.

Our commitment to this transformation forms a center of gravity around which the energy of change can coalesce. The new pattern that emerges allows us to be lifted into a different, finer environment. Step by step, as we go through the various activities of our lives, we weave through them a conscious thread of commitment that continuously allows us to mine the inner content of each experience. From that content we unravel the substance; then we direct that substance toward the establishment of a totally different pattern and a completely transcendent awareness.

So growing has two qualities – openness and firmness but firmness within the context of an infinitely open field. This firmness within an open field manifests in the world as our ethical presentation. Inside, it manifests as the stabilization of our mind in the awareness of the vitality of Life. This state is also called meditation. Meditation is the source and the end of the process of growing.

Sacrifice

Growth is a very interesting challenge, because it is an investment in our life, a balancing of our short-term and long-term interests. Because we are committed to a change, we sacrifice our short-run comfort, success, recognition, and plea-

sure into the long term. In this way it's an investment. But it's also something else: it's an act of worship and a recognition of the absolute value of Life Itself.

Every religion has sacrifice at its center. Jesus sacrificed his short-term temporal, material life into the infinite Life. In biblical Jerusalem, sacrifice went on constantly in the temple. In India, people still go to thousands of temples to offer into the fire their prized material possessions, the fruits of their labor.

Why do people do that? What can we, incomplete and limited, offer to an enlightened being, a complete person established in wholeness? And if the offering is not given because the gods need it, then who does the sacrifice

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benefit? It must be that this offering has everything to do with us, and our own interest in and need for the experience of authenticity – true life and true love – within our lives. In sacrificing ourselves, we open to the experience of authentic life, which allows us the possibility of rising above the cyclical nature of our ordinary existence.

From our commitment there extends a whole new reach and range of understanding, a whole new form of activity and endeavor. This new understanding is in no way a rejection of our past or a denial of who we are, but rather an acceptance and an absorption of the reality of where we've been, the reality of our experience, the reality of our mistakes. As we make this effort, we must begin to genuinely engage

this experience of life. Minute by minute and day by day, we absorb the understanding that allows us to live in a realm which has little to do with the ordinary time-and-space continuum that our bodies and minds move around in.

The Living Contact

Having solidly committed ourselves to transforming the quality of our life and the quality of our experience, the process of growing is ignited by our contact with a teacher (as opposed to contact with a religion or a doctrine or a dogma). It is the living relationship between student and teacher that allows both the firmness (stability) and the complete openness that are required for growth to begin to emerge from within us.

The living contact arouses within us the experience of authentic life, the experience of true love, and continuously allows us a very pure and simple context in which to cultivate this experience, uncomplicated by anything else. We are able to address the agendas, the mental conditioning, the conscious and unconscious tendencies that we continuously use to build walls around ourselves and to keep us from living in the substance of our life.

Having a teacher is extremely important, because in engaging the vitality of Life Itself we are engaging, in a way, an absolute uncertainty: when we talk about relating to something that is pure potential, that pure potentiality is also pure uncertainty. There is no fixedness within it except for the fixedness that we bring to it with our mind and emotions. A teacher brings us a support that allows us to relate to this total uncertainty without becoming lost in it, without becoming completely uncertain and totally confused ourselves.

Two Types of Training

This support comes in two important ways: mental or ethical training, and spiritual training.

Ethical training is necessary. It's very simple; it means a willingness to work, honesty, integrity, the avoidance of any kind of harm whatsoever, the avoidance of speaking or acting out any negativity toward anybody. This is how we stop creating tensions in our life. We stop reinforcing the walls. We have a simple, straightforward, pure approach to dealing with all of the strong forms of uncertainty that we encounter in any human

being, and an understanding from which we can relate to every kind of situation, knowing that at least we are not creating more difficulty for ourselves.

The next level of understanding we get from a teacher is proper instruction about our true nature. A human being is actually an extraordinary mixture of matter and energy, a remarkable coming together, out of time and space, of elements shaped by environment and by internal pressures. There's really nothing fixed about us except for our breath, and that happens continuously. We are a dynamic event, changing from moment to moment, manifesting our own potentiality in so many ways.

When we talk about ethical training and spiritual training, both of which affect our conduct in the world, you have to understand that these two forms of training are not really separate. We tend to focus more attention on the internal training, because it is more subtle and difficult to grasp. When we talk about the experience of authentic living, we usually say to take your attention inside, because that's where we experience the fulfillment of authentic living. But Life is both inside us and outside us. There is a continuous intimate link between the two. Though the door to that larger experience of Life may lie within us – and in fact Jesus said long ago that the keys to the kingdom of heaven lie within – keep in mind that it's only the doorway that lies within. The kingdom itself is the total transcendence of materiality, physicality, time, and space. It is the total transcendence of any limits, the direct and pure apprehension of the experience of Life in the full range of its vitality.

A spiritual community should provide an atmosphere that is relatively free of doubt in which ethical training and spiritual training can occur together. In such a setting, with a true teacher, we have the opportunity to encounter the extraordinary and vast ultimate uncertainty of Life Itself. We are able to stabilize our minds and cultivate a firmness within ourselves because of the support in our ordinary life that enables us, first, to reach into this vast uncertainty and, second, to evolve a deeper sensibility about the nature of life, the nature of people, and the nature of experience. Finally we come to a complete rest within the recognition of this authentic and pure living. This recognition brings with it the experience of total well-being, the experience of the total unity of all things, and a state of non-attachment.

It is our continuous connection from within ourselves to the dimension that is beyond all forms and experiences which allows us to be connected to the evernewness of this pure Life Itself and to be a vehicle through which that newness finds its way into our ordinary life. It is our stability of mind and our connection to that state which unfolds itself in our ordinary life as a great richness.

Results: Generosity, Patience, Discrimination

This combination of inner and outer training has certain manifestations. First, a person who is established in a total state of well-being is an actively generous person. To be in contact with

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the abundance that has created the whole universe, to live from that, brings an abundance into our lives that we constantly, naturally, share.

Second, it brings about the capacity for patient endurance. Because we understand the nature of Life Itself, we understand that there are in fact no difficulties, only different settings in which to play out the process of releasing energy. We release the energy crystallized in whatever material patterns present themselves before us, and we allow that release to continuously transform and renew our lives. We carry on this self-renewal through a sustained and strenuous effort, which we also call work. But there is no drudgery about it; it is a joyous work. It is the patient acquisition and endless sharing of an extraordinary awareness.

Finally, this whole manifestation shows itself as discrimination, a recognition of the shifting boundaries between all patterns and forms. It is a discrimination that is continuously aware of the variety of frequencies functioning within the field of our awareness, and of the subtle linkage between and among those frequencies that represents the essence of all forms.

This higher discrimination changes the nature of our reason for growing. At that point we no longer work within ourselves as a reaction against the brutality and stupidity of the world; rather we work as an expression of our respect for the magic hidden in all forms of life, even in the brutality and stupidity. At that stage, growing is an act of profound appreciation. If you will, it's an act of worship.

Tension is the Barrier

In the midst of this experience of life within us and around us, what is it that continuously gives rise to the experience of drowning in life rather than being nourished by it?

Quite simply, it is tension. Some of the tension is internal; much of it is external. These tensions, which basically reflect the atmosphere that we have emerged from and the atmosphere that we are able to connect and relate to, restrict and limit us. For most people, these tensions become the boundaries that define their individual existence. It's like the boundary markers on a beach that tell you where to swim. There is water on one side, there is water on the other side. But because of the way our mind works, we see only this area for swimming, and we only swim there.

Tension is a great challenge in our spiritual practice, because it is always present in life. Tension is the subtle dynamic present in any movement. From a creative perspective this tension is a completely positive, totally extraordinary event. It is, in fact, the vitality of awareness itself, the vibrancy of Life. This vibrancy gives rise to the presence of all content and all forms; everything that is differentiated is differentiated due to tension. But this differentiation is, in a very real way, superficial. It is our acceptance of this superficial distinction that causes us to live a limited and unfulfilling life. It is because of this acceptance of the limited that we do not contact and participate in the experience of authentic living, and from that experience extend

the whole manifestation of our life as one of great quality and richness.

When we talk about having a living contact with a spiritual teacher, what we mean is that we are awakened from this kind of superficial misunderstanding, and connected to the possibility for freedom. This contact creates the need for both an ethical awareness and an inner training. We need to structure our mind and our energy so that we can begin to confront tension directly. We learn to maintain our balance and connection while taking down the walls that we would ordinarily understand as the limits of our life and our potential.

In this process, of course, total changes will take place in the field of our awareness and experience. And within the context of these total changes we want only balance and harmony to manifest, because taking down these walls is done not only as a service to ourselves (it is the expansion of our own creative horizon), but also as a service to other people and to Life Itself.

Uncertainty and Trust

The biggest obstacle we face in dealing with tensions is the fundamental difficulty of relating to a total uncertainty. The highest state, as I've said before, is completely uncertain. When, through your spiritual practice, you begin to recognize the superficiality of boundaries, it is initially disconcerting. It's like going swimming and suddenly waking to the fact that you're in the middle of the ocean when you thought the beach was fifty feet away.

The insecurity that gets tripped off in people as they begin to deal with a much deeper creative potential within themselves is profound. Because of our attachment to our bodies, and because of the programming that we have, we have a psychological need to struggle. Because of our need for drama, the insecurity that rises up in us will in every way reinforce the tensions. We experience such discomfort that we will go back and build up those superficial boundaries even more rather than confront the pain of a total rewiring – the total reorganization within ourselves of mind, emotions, and physical life.

But through our living contact with the power of Life Itself, and because of our training, we should have the skill, mental self-control, and energy self-control to experience a kind of security inside ourselves, a total trust in the energy, that makes it possible for us to carefully

deal with this powerful event. Dealing with tensions is only possible, in fact, when we have this trust within ourselves.

We have that trust, first of all, in a teacher. We strive to cultivate a sense of connectedness. We cultivate this trust in order to unfold within our own minds an understanding of the balance and the sensitivity necessary to deal with tension. This understanding allows us to trust the totally positive program present in Life Itself that is constantly working within and around us to uplift us.

This trust is a sacred trust. It is something that we base our lives on in an individual sense, and it becomes the doorway through which we have access to the un-

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derstanding of the nature of Life Itself. This very deep trust is the same thing as a total surrender. It is a trust in Life Itself and the vast creative power of upliftment that is persistent therein. It is an experience of and a connection to an understanding of Life Itself.

In this trust we recognize that Life is. Within and around us, Life is. Life is self-organizing, self-motivating, self-knowing, self-expressing. It is not that I am anything; this body is only a reflection of the creative capacity which is present in Life Itself.

Total Well-being

To begin to live from this understanding gives rise within us to a state of total

well-being that is beyond the stresses and strains of ordinary living. Our whole understanding of time and space is completely rearranged, because no longer are we limited by the superficial boundaries that arise and subside through the action of the creative power implicit in Life.

To give you an analogy, the ocean has lots of different currents and pressures functioning in it, but is itself a consistent medium. It's all water, all the way through, but because of the various pressures functioning within and around that event, all kinds of different wave patterns and current patterns and tide patterns are articulated. Those boundaries – current boundaries, tidal boundaries, wave patterns – are all superficial. We can notice them and think they're interesting, but we understand that fundamentally it is all water, it is all one.

Life also is One. That understanding changes our concern for our own material and physical well-being; we don't have the same paranoia about it. We can allow for the natural creative power of Life Itself to flow within us and around us. In this we discover an extended benefit which totally transcends our human idea of desires and wants and needs. We understand even in the beginning of this experience that Life Itself has no problem.

It's only because of our limited understanding and our attachment to the *forms* of experience that we have no access to the *substance* of experience – the vast creative vitality which is implicit in all experience and the universal power from which experience itself arises. Consequently we worry, we suffer, we strain, we anguish, and we die. We must, in earnest and with great dedication, pursue our understanding of and our direct connection to authentic living, and do this through the process of growing. We must make the effort to take down the walls, to dissolve the tensions, break the patterns, extend our awareness throughout the whole field of our creative awareness. Only then do we begin to live and die for a real reason.

That reason is the experience of authenticity and an understanding of the vastness of Life Itself, which removes us immediately from the realm of suffering. If we understand that Life is infinite, that what is alive is alive and that things that are alive don't die – by definition – then fear, insecurity, and suffering no longer have any hold on us. We are able to completely relax and, with virtue and generosity and patience and sustained effort, cultivate within ourselves the capacity for

contemplative attention and discriminative awareness. These allow us to recognize, extend, and dissolve the superficial boundaries that are limitations to our awareness; further, they allow us to participate completely in the experience of authentic living.

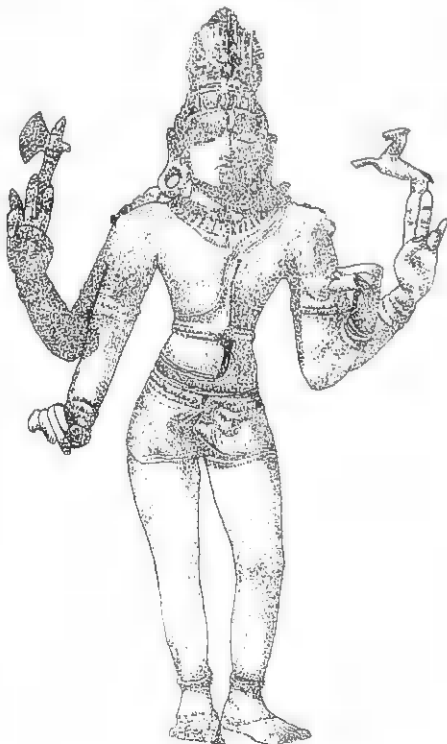
Whatever we're doing in this world is only fulfilling, ultimately, within the context of our effort to grow and to connect to the infinite creative capacity implicit in authentic living. Any work we do, any form of life we have, is meaningful and enriching. Don't think you need any other kind of life than the life you have, and don't think there's any possibility someplace else that does not exist where you are at this moment. Though the process of growing may take you through many different types of scenery, though you may play many different roles and have many different jobs, the place to be is within yourself. Participate in the total flow of creative energy available to you in each moment; watch, with discrimination and careful attention, the process by which this creative energy structures itself as a pattern and is expressed in the field of your everyday experience. In this way you are structuring, layer by layer and stage by stage, the endless potentiality for renewal and recrea-

tivity that is possible in life, sharing that recreativity with all the different people you interact with.

Don't expect to grow without effort and without some pain. Whatever is valuable in this world we pay for. We pay for the experience of total well-being and absolute upliftment by enduring a certain amount of physical discomfort as our mechanism makes the adjustment from a diet of mostly crap to something of great substance. But with the proper training and the proper attitude, this experience is one that is totally exciting and completely rewarding, and the pain is completely worth it.

In whatever form it takes for you, and in whatever way you decide to pursue it, growing is not the most important thing in living, it is the *only* thing. It is the only investment that you'll ever make that you'll never lose on. It is because of our effort to sustain our contact with this extraordinary creative energy that we find stability in the highest state of awareness and we become established in the completely extraordinary and often ecstatic experience of authentic living. In our work it is that experience that we wish for ourselves and for everybody else, and it is with that wish I leave you now. ■

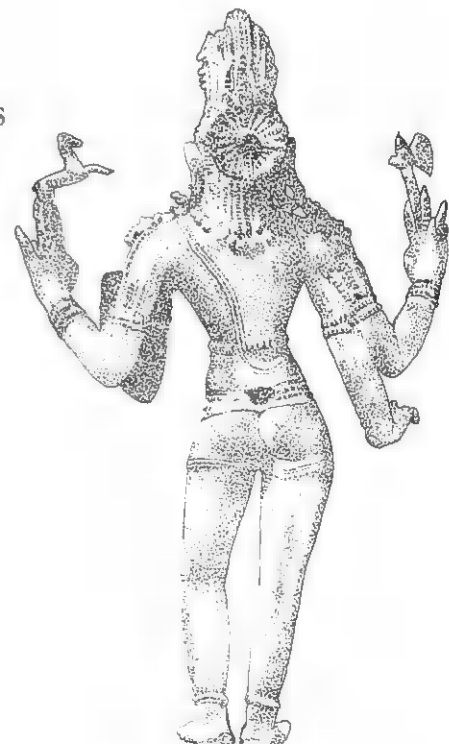
The experience
of authenticity
and an
understanding of
the vastness of
Life Itself
removes us
immediately
from the realm
of suffering.



Oh Rumi,
Shams has taken your books
and thrown them
into the Well.
Now all that's left
is to drink
its sweet water.

How do I know this?
I have such a teacher.

— Linda Barnes —



The “Right Way” to Practice HATHA YOGA

by SHARON WARD

I have a friend who is an excellent hatha teacher: her form is perfect, her understanding of the body is complete, her knowledge of the goal of hatha is good... but there is something odd about her; she never seems happy. Her attitude is often depressed and heavy. My friend reads all the “right” texts, she goes to lots of workshops, she “tries out” many different meditation teachers. She searches and searches but never seems to find the key to her goal. I like her and I respect her, but I can’t figure out how someone with so much going for her can be so down all of the time.

Last week I asked Swamiji about my friend. There seemed to be such a big difference between her “walk” and her “talk.” Her behavior was confusing to me. Swamiji looked at me and said, “Sharon, how do you attain happiness?” As usual, the five things that went through my mind did not come out of my mouth. Instead, I simply waited. Swamiji continued, “There is only one way to attain

happiness – by being happy! There is no other way.” He went on, “If you do one thing hoping it will

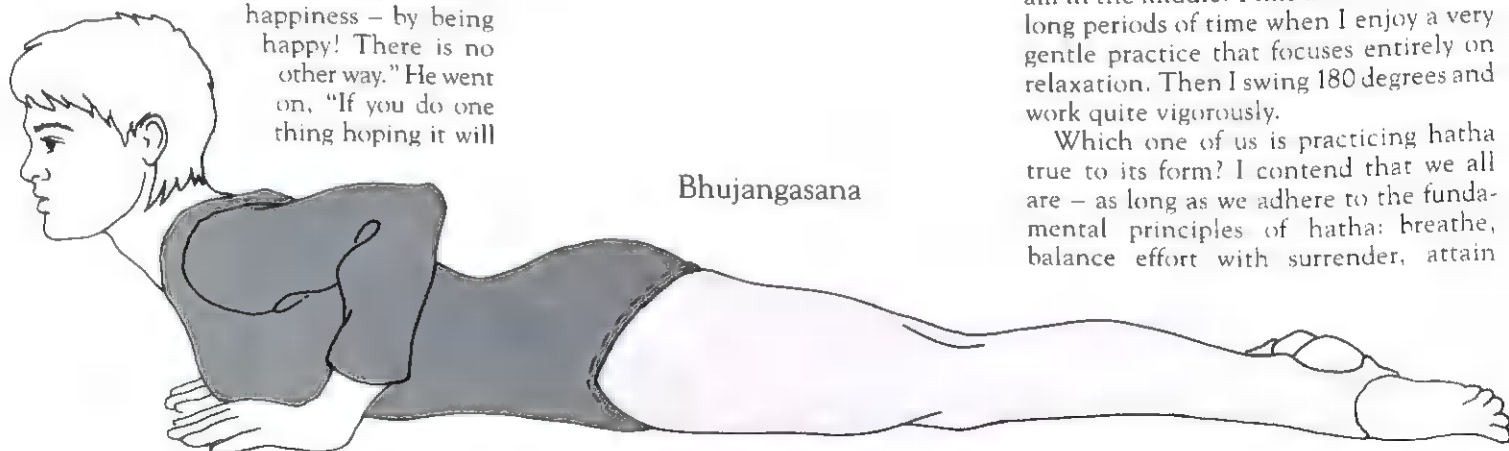
*Your
inner feeling
is the best judge
of your work –
and you decide what
your inner feeling
is going to be!*

make you happy, then you drop that one and try another, and another, you are a spiritual materialist. You will never find happiness that way. You must simply decide to be happy each and every day, no matter what. Then you will have attained happiness.”

Just be happy? Now that’s pretty simple, isn’t it? As I thought about this, I began to explore how it applied to my life and to a hatha yoga practice.

As with all aspects of life, there is no one “right way” to do hatha yoga. It is a very individual practice. I currently teach a class where one of the students is totally content doing three poses: child’s pose, wall hang, and shavasana. As you might have guessed, his love for hatha is based on the relaxation it brings into his life. Another temperament is demonstrated by one of the hatha teachers at the Institute: she is very excited about hatha that focuses on building strength. She enjoys a vigorous hatha practice. I am in the middle. I like a mix. There are long periods of time when I enjoy a very gentle practice that focuses entirely on relaxation. Then I swing 180 degrees and work quite vigorously.

Which one of us is practicing hatha true to its form? I contend that we all are – as long as we adhere to the fundamental principles of hatha: breathe, balance effort with surrender, attain



Bhujangasana

Sharon M. Ward, the Institute's Executive Director and a certified hatha yoga teacher, has studied with Swamiji for fourteen years.

steadiness and comfort in each asana or pose, feel the energy rise up, and experience a state of meditation. When we work following these principles we are practicing hatha. If we practice with a heart that is light and we are happy, the mind naturally turns inward. On the other hand, if we practice what we *think* we should be doing, but our attitude is one of heaviness and no joy, we can never reach the steadiness, comfort, and openness that are the necessary precursors of the state of meditation.

All of this is to say that you may be inclined to like a vigorous hatha "workout" or you may be of a more gentle persuasion. It doesn't matter. Simply try to practice hatha with a spirit of happiness and see what happens.

The two asanas described below are considered stress-reducing poses. Approach their practice with a light heart and pay attention to the vibration generated by the asanas.

Adho Mukha Svanasana

Adho mukha svanasana means "downward facing dog." It is an excellent asana that can be modified to concentrate on the hamstrings, hips, a specific segment of the back (lower, middle, or upper), or the shoulder joints. Begin by kneeling on the floor. Bring your hands to the floor in table position. The knees should be directly under the hips, the hands directly under the shoulders, and the torso parallel to the floor.

Spread your fingers wide apart. Make sure that the hands are even (one hand should not lead the other). Try to feel the weight at the base of the index finger on each hand. Next look at the elbows. The "eyes," or insides, of the elbows should be facing one another. If you have hyperextended elbows, bend them slightly out of hyper-

Curl the toes under. Breathe in. On a dynamic exhale, lift the buttocks up towards the ceiling, straightening the legs. Inhale and lift up high onto the toes, lift the tailbone towards the ceiling. Feel the spine elongate. Then exhale, bringing the heels toward the floor. Keep the front of the thigh muscles firm (they make the effort or *abhyasa* in this pose), and pull up to straighten the knees. Try to experience the hamstrings "letting go" or surrendering (*vairagya*m). If the hamstrings are very tight and stubborn, however, bend the knees slightly. And if the knees are hyperextended, bend them slightly out of hyperextension.

Press the palms into the floor, keeping most of the weight concentrated at the base of the index finger. Straighten the elbows and draw the chest back and down, opening at the armpits. Pull the shoulder blades back. Feel the neck lengthen. Relax the muscles of the throat and those surrounding the back of the tongue.

Feel the energy rise from the feet to the hips, and then flow from the hips to the top of the head (which should be resting between the arms). Hold the pose for one to two minutes, breathing fully, yet slowly and gently.

When you are ready to come down, inhale and drop the knees to the floor. Keep your hands on the floor and slide your buttocks back over your

feet, chest resting on your thighs. Feel the lengthening through the arms, then allow the arms to come alongside your feet. The forehead can

rest on the floor or you can turn your head to the side if this is more comfortable. Breathe fully, bringing air into the back of the lungs. This is the child's pose.

Adho mukha svanasana (dog stretch) will relieve stiffness in the legs and at the same time strengthen them and make them more shapely. The dog stretch can also relieve arthritis in the joints of the shoulder. On the mental level, *adho mukha svanasana* helps to remove fatigue and restore lost energy.

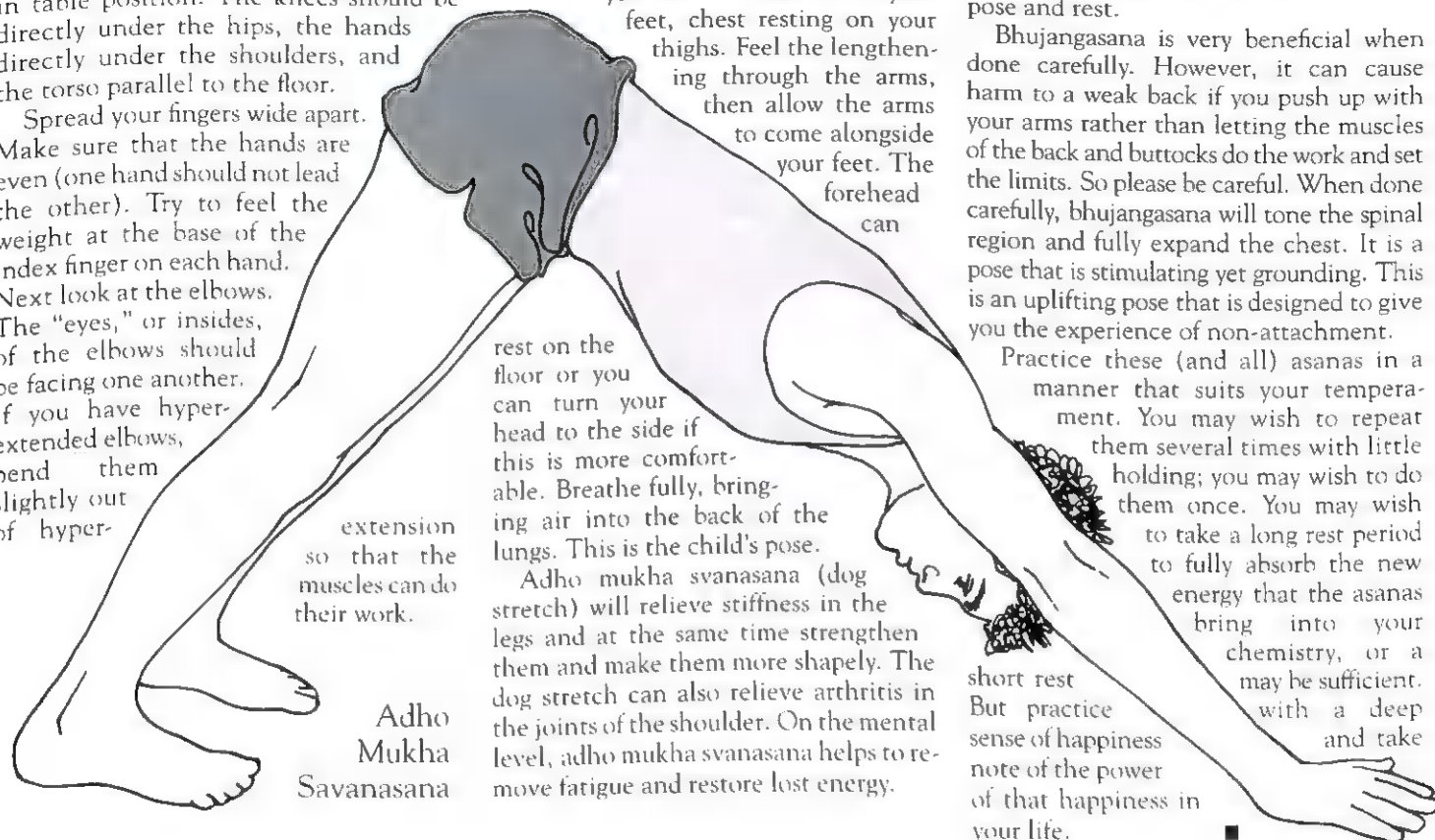
Bhujangasana

Bhujangasana means "cobra pose." Please read this description entirely before attempting to do the pose. Cobra begins by lying face-down on the floor, legs together. Place your hands underneath your shoulders. The elbows should be close to, but not touching, the body. Press your ankles, knees, and thighs together; keep the feet, legs, and hips entirely on the floor. Draw your shoulders down away from your neck and head. Breathe softly. As you inhale, feel your head and neck stretch out toward the wall in front of you. Initiate the lift from the collar bones and chest, using your back muscles to make the effort, not your arms. As you lift, your forehead should skim the floor, then nose, then chin — think of reaching out, elongating the neck, rather than bending backwards. Your eyes gaze forward and up. Continue to tighten your buttocks and keep both legs and both hipbones entirely on the floor. Do not over-arch the lower back by pushing with your arms. Your chest will move forward like the hood of a cobra. Keep your face soft and breathe gently.

At first, complete the full pose in one breath — inhaling up and exhaling down. Later, with practice, you can breathe softly while holding the pose. When you come out of the pose, pull back into child's pose and rest.

Bhujangasana is very beneficial when done carefully. However, it can cause harm to a weak back if you push up with your arms rather than letting the muscles of the back and buttocks do the work and set the limits. So please be careful. When done carefully, *bhujangasana* will tone the spinal region and fully expand the chest. It is a pose that is stimulating yet grounding. This is an uplifting pose that is designed to give you the experience of non-attachment.

Practice these (and all) asanas in a manner that suits your temperament. You may wish to repeat them several times with little holding; you may wish to do them once. You may wish to take a long rest period to fully absorb the new energy that the asanas bring into your chemistry, or a short rest may be sufficient. But practice with a deep sense of happiness and take note of the power of that happiness in your life.



NUTRITION

Beyond the Basics

by Rachel Brooks, M.D.

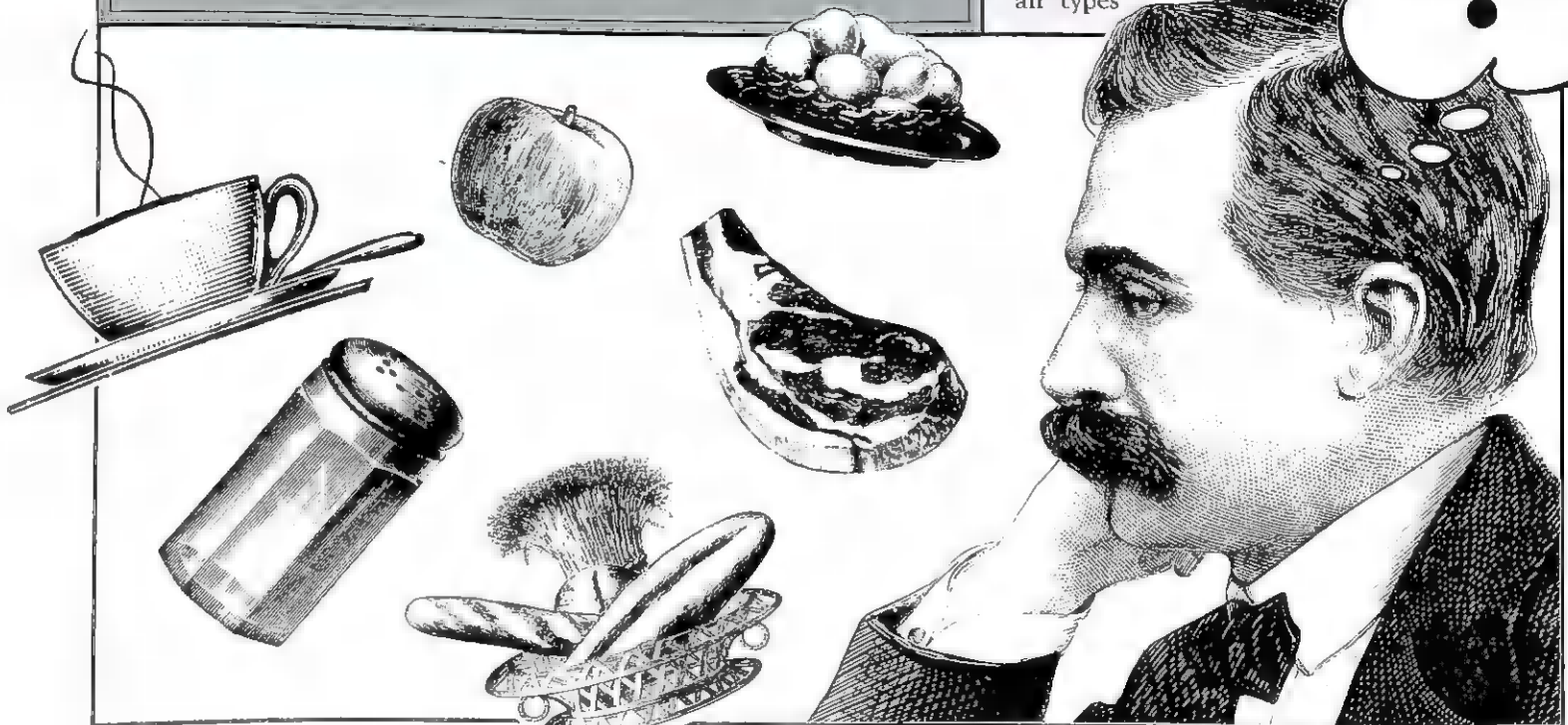
What about fiber,
cholesterol, salt, coffee/caffeine,
and milk? More surprising facts and
practical suggestions.

In the first article of this series we developed dietary guidelines for the basic food groups. These suggested eating a modest amount of protein (with the protein coming more from plant than animal sources), eliminating fried foods and reducing fat consumption overall, increasing the use of whole grains, beans, and vegetables, and drastically reducing simple sugar intake.

Beyond these basic food groups are other substances that need to be considered as we search for a diet that allows us to optimize our health. Many of these, like fiber and cholesterol, have become buzzwords or fads with devoted followers and detractors. As before, I have tried to sift through the opinions, find the common thread, and put this together with my own and others' clinical experience.

FIBER

Fiber intake has suffered as the average American has moved away from whole, fresh, unprocessed foods. In and of itself, fiber has no nutritional value, since it is not absorbed and used as food. It does, however, play an important role in overall health. Fiber is the undigestible portion of all plant foods, with each category having its own unique type of fiber; all types



Second in a series on nutrition derived from lectures given by Rachel Brooks at the Institute's Wellness Weekend in June, 1987.

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are important. *Bran* refers to the outer coating of all whole grains (wheat, oats, rice, etc.). *Guar gum* is the fiber in beans and *pectin* is the fiber portion of fruits.

While everyone agrees that fiber is a crucial element in the diet, it is not yet clear what all the benefits are and how these benefits come about. Perhaps the single most important thing that fiber does is speed up bowel-transit time. The ideal is for food to pass through the digestive system in 24 hours, although for people on the standard American diet it's often 48, 72, or even 96 hours. This stagnation causes problems by allowing substances that are relatively toxic to have prolonged contact with the lining of the colon. These substances include normal elements, such as bile salts, and abnormal ones, formed by the decay of digestive by-products. This may explain why a lack of dietary fiber is associated with cancer of the colon.

So a major step you can take to promote your general health and the health of your colon is to keep the digestive process moving. A diet high in fiber will do this. It will move a lot of harmful elements through the bowels and out of the system, before they have a chance to cause trouble.

If your bowel function needs encouragement, fiber should be supplemented in your diet. Otherwise, if you are eating a healthy quantity of unprocessed and/or raw fruits, vegetables, grains, and beans, then you are probably getting plenty of fiber.

CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is consumed in excess in this country. The average American eats 600 milligrams (mgs.) of cholesterol a day, while the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition (headed by George McGovern in 1976) recommended a daily intake of 300 mgs. The Pritikin diet is particularly restrictive in this area, suggesting a consumption of only 100 mgs. We actually don't need to eat any cholesterol; the body can manufacture all that it requires.

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that is found only in animal products. (So it is no great revelation when a box of cereal, a plant product, proclaims it is cholesterol-free.) It is present in all animal products to some degree. There is a common misconception that cholesterol is a fat and is more concentrated in the fatty portion of foods. The fact is, it is generally distributed throughout all parts of animal product foods, occurring in both the fat and lean portions of meats.

While there is some debate whether severely restricting dietary cholesterol can lower the blood cholesterol, it is clear that excess intake can lead to increased levels in the blood. This increased blood cholesterol correlates with atherosclerosis, heart attacks, and strokes. Another factor, widely held in the alternative health community, although not as yet by standard medicine, is that sugar intake correlates with cholesterol levels. The Pritikin program has shown itself to lower cholesterol levels significantly, and it is noteworthy that Pritikin restricts both cholesterol and sugar intake.

As we look to modify our cholesterol intake we must familiarize ourselves with

Chart 1: Cholesterol Content

Food	Amount	Cholesterol (mg)
Beef (lean)	3 oz.	77
Liver, beef	3 oz.	372
Chicken, white (no skin)	3 oz.	65
Chicken, dark (no skin)	3 oz.	77
Eggs (whole or yolk)	3 oz.	252
Flounder	3 oz.	69
Halibut	3 oz.	50
Lobster	3 oz.	71
Shrimp	3 oz.	128
Tuna (canned)	3 oz.	55
Butter	1 T.	35
Cheese, cottage (4% fat)	½ c.	12
Cheese (hard)	1 oz.	26
Milk (2% fat)	1 c.	22
Milk (whole)	1 c.	34
Yogurt (lowfat)	1 c.	17

Taken from *Jane Brody's Nutrition Book*

where it exists (see Chart 1). Egg yolks, shellfish, and organ meats are the worst culprits. One egg yolk (250 mgs.) contains almost the entire daily allotment recommended by the McGovern Committee. If your consumption of animal products is low, then you can probably be a little more liberal in your egg usage. One way to manage with eggs is to make your two-egg omelet with two egg whites and one egg yolk. There are also substitutions that you can make in baking, described in various cookbooks. Unfortunately, the commercially available egg substitutes are chemical nightmares and should be avoided.

While controversy still exists, overall it is a good idea to be moderate in your intake. You should be especially careful if

you are at high risk for heart disease and atherosclerosis (for example, if you have a strong family history of these conditions or are diabetic). In general, however, if you are already following the guidelines of getting most of your protein from plant sources and eating little or no sugar, then cholesterol is not likely to be a problem for you.

SALT

Salt is another substance we Americans consume in excess, with infants, children, and adults all eating ten to twenty grams (two to four teaspoons) each day. The McGovern Committee recommended five grams (one teaspoon) as an upper limit. Pritikin suggests no more than two to four grams of salt a day. Since our body systems evolved at a time when salt availability was very low, we are built to hold onto this substance tightly. Therefore we need very little salt each day, just one-tenth of a teaspoon.

To clarify a confusing point: so far I have been talking about quantities of *salt*; however, labels on foods describe amounts of *sodium*. Salt is a combination of sodium and chloride, with sodium accounting for forty percent of the salt. So the recommended four or five grams of salt converts to 1600 to 2000 milligrams (mgs.) of sodium.

The main health problem associated with salt is high blood pressure. With few exceptions, the more salt a society consumes, the greater the number of people who have high blood pressure. While many individuals can eat salt without developing this problem, about twenty percent of Americans are prone to developing high blood pressure if they eat too much salt. Unfortunately we have no reliable way of predicting this when we are young and developing our taste for salt.

Excess salt also causes water retention, which can exacerbate many of the symptoms of pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS). This excess water can also cause mild joint swelling, leading to aching and stiffness in the joints.

Enough sodium occurs naturally in foods that we don't need to add any salt to our diet. Whatever we add beyond this our bodies must get rid of. Much of the salt we eat is from hidden sources — you may be surprised how much you are actually eating. Processed foods are notorious (see Chart 2). Lipton Vegetable Cup of Soup, for instance, contains almost your whole allotment for the day. Just a tablespoon of Wishbone Italian Dressing accounts for a fifth of the daily recommended

amount. Other foods are surprisingly high in sodium because of the way they are processed. Pickles are soaked in salt brine, and cheese usually has salt added as part of the ripening process. Be aware of things like the sodium in antacids or in vitamin C if you take it as sodium ascorbate. Certain vegetables, such as celery, chard, and kale, are relatively high in sodium, but this is not a problem unless you need to restrict your sodium for a specific health reason.

Since salt is an acquired taste, we can retrain our palate to enjoy foods with much less salt. As you try to cut back on sodium, avoid foods particularly high in it, gradually use less in your cooking, and increase your use of herbs, spices, and low-salt condiments. As is the case with sugar, your tastes will definitely change. Most people who have become accustomed to low-salt foods soon find that many foods like canned soups are inedible because they are far too salty.

CAFFEINE AND COFFEE

I realize that caffeine and coffee are near and dear to many people's hearts, but I'm afraid there is little in the way of good news from a health standpoint. Among caffeine beverages, coffee has the greatest concentration, tea has a third to half that amount, and some soft drinks, particularly colas, have a lesser, although still significant, caffeine content.

Caffeine is a direct stimulant to the central nervous system, making you feel alert and awake. It also increases the levels of adrenaline, sugar, and free fatty acids in the blood. This is part of the rush you feel; but the whole body gets geared up for no real reason. It is an exhausting cycle for the body to be thrust into high gear and then to plummet out of it. So caffeine, like sugar, can lead to chronic fatigue – ironically, the very thing you were trying to alter in the first place.

In addition, caffeine is associated with irregular heart beat, anxiety, headaches, fibrocystic breast disease, and stomach irritation (it increases the acidity of the stomach by twenty percent). It also causes the body to excrete more calcium, which ultimately comes from the bones. So caffeine can be added to the list of contributors to osteoporosis, along with sugar and excessive protein.

Many of these problems are dose-related, that is, the more you take in, the bigger the reaction. Caffeine acts in the body as a drug and there is a definite addictive quality to it. As you cut down or

quit using it you may experience withdrawal symptoms of irritability, fatigue, or headache.

Beyond the caffeine issue is an additional concern with coffee, be it regular or decaffeinated. Those aromatic oils that give coffee its wonderful smell are very irritating to the digestive system, particularly the gall bladder. This can directly cause digestive problems and contribute to gall bladder "attacks." It also causes a specific irritation to the muscles of the back. I have seen many cases of abdominal, back, and neck pain "cured" by eliminating coffee from the diet.

Chart 2: Sodium Content

Food	Amount	Sodium (mg)
Lipton Vegetable Cup-a-Soup	8 oz.	1,058
Wish-Bone Italian Dressing	1 T.	315
Kentucky Fried	3 pieces	2,283
Pepperidge Farm wh. wheat bread	2 slices	214
Nabisco Premium Saltines	10 (1 oz.)	430
Lowfat Cottage Cheese	½ c.	435
Cheddar Cheese	1 oz.	190
Tamari	1 T.	133
Ketchup	1 T.	154
Sauerkraut	1 c.	1,755
Pickles, dill	1 med.	928
Celery, diced	1 c.	151
Carrots, sliced	1 c.	51

Taken from Jane Brody's Nutrition Book

It would be best to stay away from both regular and decaffeinated coffee. Tea is probably okay if you can tolerate the caffeine. There are some problems attributed to tea, but they are not as great a concern if tea is used moderately. Regarding herbal teas, remember that originally many of these herbs were used for medicinal purposes and in large doses can have an effect on you. So if you drink a lot of herb tea, drink a variety of kinds and be alert for any specific ill effect. Finally, you can drink hot water with lemon and/or a touch of honey.

MILK

While we are on the subject of beverages, a quick word about milk. There are

a number of reasons we probably should not go out of our way to drink it. Many adults do not have the enzymes to digest it properly, it is a common hidden food allergy, and whole milk is high in fat. In addition, there are concerns regarding the effects that pasteurization and homogenization of milk have on the body. Few people outside the standard medical community would advocate the use of much milk. Some milk on your cereal in the morning is probably fine if you tolerate it, but a number of glasses a day should be avoided. Note, however, that many people can tolerate yogurt and cheese (although remember cheese is high in fat and salt), as these are processed differently and are generally easier to digest. Non-dairy substitute products, like egg substitutes, are chemical brews that should be avoided by everyone.

CONCLUSION

So now where do we stand? How do we incorporate all this information into something we can actually put in our mouths? First, I would look at your present diet and identify the areas that you want to improve. Then, establish what direction this improvement lies in – more fiber, less salt, no sugar. As you think of heading in these directions, it is good to focus not on the denial of certain foods but on the improved health and well-being you will experience as a result of the changes you make. Instead of focusing on what you can't eat, take some time to explore new options and taste sensations.

Make the changes slowly or quickly as suits your individual style. Remember that some things like sugar and caffeine can be addictions and require special strategies. You need to decide whether you can taper these down or go "cold turkey." If you stop abruptly you will have some withdrawal symptoms, but it won't be long before you begin to feel better. Also, note that if you simply eat more complex carbohydrates (grains, beans, vegetables, and fruit) and you eat them in their natural unprocessed form, then you are already going a long way toward correcting any problems with proteins, fats, fiber, cholesterol, and salt.

Making the effort to discover and move towards our own optimal nutrition is worth it. Not only do we experience a sense of increased well-being right now, but we have the deeper satisfaction of knowing that we are very directly cultivating our health and well-being in the future as well. ■

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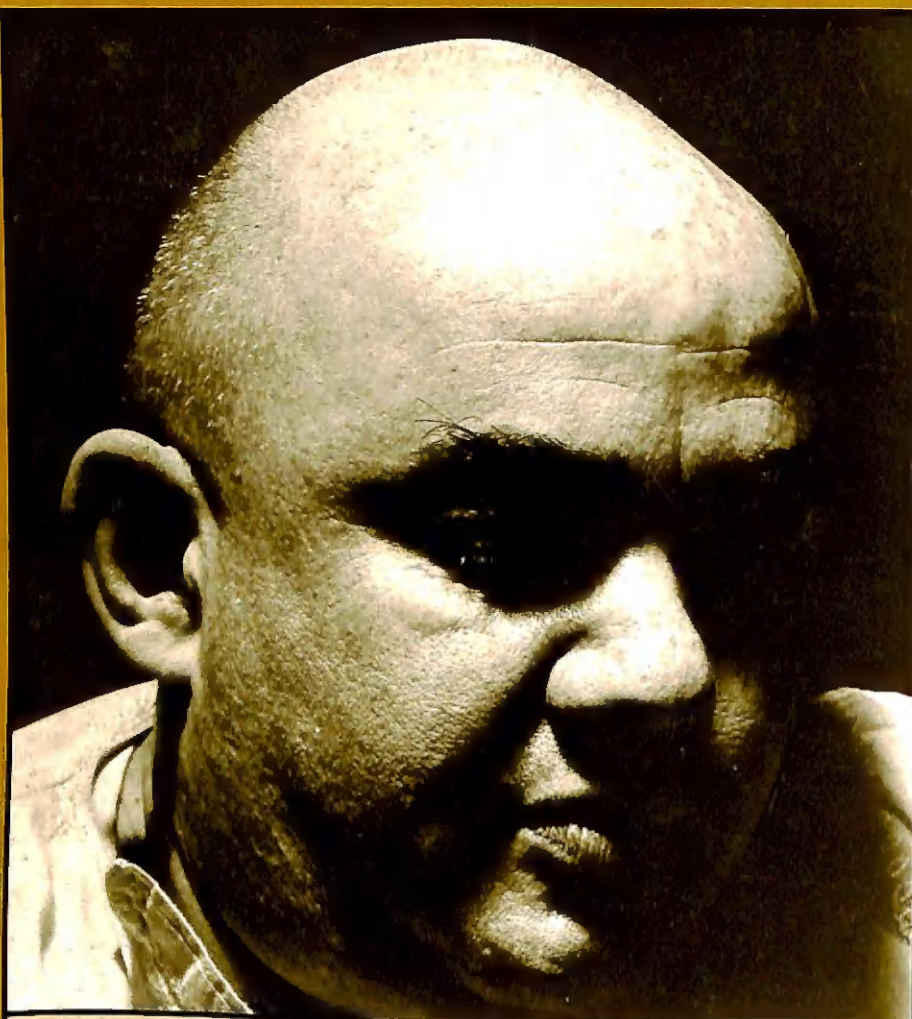
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It is this inexhaustible capacity in human beings that I love and wish to nourish. It is the deep expression of God and is the only facet of life worth recognizing. Feed it and it will grow; watch it and it will express the mystery of creation.

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